



**HOW TO
WRITE A
WINNING
C.V.**

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The basics

What is a CV?

A CV is a one-to-two page document that lists your work experience, training and education. A potential employer can use your CV find out if you have the right **experience** for a job.

Why is it important?

A CV is the first glimpse an employer gets of **you and what you're about**, so it's important to get it right from the start.

Employers can read **hundreds of CVs** for a single job – so keep it brief, make sure it's easy to read and only include content that is relevant to the job you are applying for.

What's in a CV?

There's no right or wrong way to structure a CV, but there are some basic elements that are needed to make a good one.

Your CV should include:

- **personal details** – your name and contact details
- **education, qualifications** and **training** you've undertaken
- **an employment history** – what you've worked as, as well as **skills** you've acquired along the way
- any **interests** you may have that would be relevant to the job
- **references** – people you're happy for a prospective employer to contact to get a better sense of you as a person and a as worker.

Starting from scratch

- Get a blank piece of paper and write down your experience so far – both work (part-time jobs, voluntary/charity work) and education (qualifications, courses and training). List them with the most recent first.
- Note down **the start and end dates** for each role.
- For each job, think about any tasks or responsibilities you had, and write it down. **Try to come up with at least three to four for each one.**
- Next, write down **hobbies** that you take part in regularly and **any extra-curricular activities** you took part in at school, like sports or music groups. Give specific details for these.

Beginning to piece it together

Now that you have all your details, it's time to start constructing your CV.

Personal details

Your personal details are one of the **most important things** on your CV. You should include:

- your full name in **bold** at the top
- your home address
- a working email address – make sure it sounds professional
- a working phone number - either a landline or mobile

Education, qualifications and training

Although your employment history will be what the employer is most interested in, including details about qualifications and your educational background is important, particularly if it is relevant to the job you are applying for.

- You should list your qualifications **in order by most recent first**.
- It's important to be **as accurate as possible** about what qualifications you have.
- Also list **any extra-curricular activities** you've been involved with in school – it suggests you are a well-rounded individual.

Employment history

This is the central part of your CV and the section **which employers will refer to most**.

- As before, you should list all your working experiences, both paid and unpaid, and the time you spent there, **starting from the most recent**.
- For every role, make **your job title** and the name of **your employer** as clear as possible.
- For each role, write **a brief description of your role and responsibilities**. It may be easier to write this in **bullet points**. You should aim to have **3-4 points** as part of each role.

Interests and hobbies

If you have space and think it would be relevant to the job you're applying for, it's a good idea to make a section dedicated to your own interests. Remember, employers won't care about very generic interests, such as travelling, reading or watching TV.

References

A **reference** is a short testimonial from someone that knows you. This person is called a referee. It gives an employer a better idea of your reliability and ability to do the job.

It's common for people to write 'references available on request'. However, you may want to include your referee's name and contact details on your CV.

Whatever you do, if you want to use someone as a reference, **make sure you get their permission first**. It's common courtesy to do so and also means they will be prepared to talk about you in case they are contacted.

Make it look professional

You've finally written up your CV – but does it look the part? It's always important to make sure the format is correct and that it is easy to read.

No matter how experienced or well suited you are for a job, **first impressions are everything**.

- Use a **clear and professional font**. You should avoid “informal” fonts like Comic Sans. Think Arial, Helvetica or Gill Sans.
- Keep in mind the size of your font – a good size is around 12pt.
- The entire content of your CV should be in **black**.
- Don’t include a photo in your CV, unless it’s specified by an employer.
- Check your **spelling and grammar**. If you can, print off your CV and read through it, making any corrections as you go.
- If your CV is more than two pages, it’s too long. Make sure you keep it **two pages or less** – this may mean you need to cut your word length.
- **Bullet points** are a good way to communicate everything quickly and clearly.
- Finally, if you can, **get someone else to look over your CV** – a family member, a friend, or even a teacher. They can spot things that you may have missed or forgotten about.

Final tips

- Keep your CV **up-to-date** with new employment experiences and qualifications..
- If you’re writing your CV to apply for a particular job, it’s a good idea to **write it with that job in mind**. You should try to gear your CV towards the skills and experience required in the job advertisement..
- Sometimes, an employer may request a **cover letter** as well as a CV. A cover letter (or covering letter) is a short piece of writing that is meant to build on your CV in more depth and tell an employer why you are suitable for the job. It’s

important that you follow the same rules here of keeping it **short and easy to read.**

- Writing a CV can feel strange. Being super positive about yourself can feel unnatural. But remember that you are **selling yourself**, so don't hold back.

More advice about creating a CV

[BBC Bitesize guide to CV writing](#)

[nidirect – CVs and cover letters](#)

[Prospects – How to write a CV](#)